

in recruiting 1,500 Federal employees to become volunteer reading tutors through the *D.C. Reads This Summer* program. Employees who choose to sign up with *D.C. Reads This Summer* will receive training and be able to work one-on-one with students once a week for 6 weeks at one of 32 school- and community-based tutoring sites around the city. I encourage departments and agencies that have not already done so to inform employees of this rewarding volunteer opportunity and assist where possible in transporting employees to and from the sites. I also ask that you continue to encourage and support employees who choose to volunteer through other community programs. In addition to *D.C. Reads*, there are many excellent programs being run through libraries and religious and community centers throughout the D.C. area. Finally, I encourage you to maintain or strengthen any preexisting partnerships that your department or agency may already have with D.C. or other local school systems.

William J. Clinton

Remarks on Gun Control Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters in Paris

June 17, 1999

I would just like to make a brief statement. Sometime today the United States Congress will be called upon to vote on whether to close the gun show loophole. It seems to me there's a very simple, direct question. If we close the loophole and do background checks in a comprehensive fashion at the gun shows, will we succeed, as we have with the Brady bill, in keeping more guns out of the hands of criminals and others who shouldn't have them—at every little inconvenience to legitimate gun owners.

The answer to that question is, yes. Everyone knows the answer to that question is yes. Therefore, I hope that this vote will be cast by Congress in the spirit that has gripped the country after the tragedy at Littleton, thinking about those children and other children that we can still save.

Once again, I think that the gun lobby is just wrong about this. And we've seen several

gun manufacturers come forward and say that the gun show loophole ought to be closed. We've seen several individual Republicans, and members of the NRA, come forward and say this. They're just wrong here. And I hope and pray that Congress will do the right thing.

Q. Mr. President, have you talked to Mr. Dingell and why is he doing this to the Democrats?

The President. I don't think he thinks he's doing this to the Democrats. I believe that this is something on which we have a profound disagreement on. I believe that John Dingell believes he's doing the right thing. But I know that most Members of Congress in both parties agree that the gun show loophole, if closed, would keep more guns out of the hands of criminals. That's what they think. And of course, we have about 80 percent of the Democrats in favor of this, maybe more, maybe 90 percent—I don't know but way—the vast majority. And most of the Republicans are voting the other way, the vast majority. They feel a certain amount of gratitude to the NRA for putting them in the majority in the House in the first place, by frightening people over the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. And I understand that.

But now we've got 5 years of experience with the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. All lawful gun owners can still go hunting, can still engage in sport shooting, but we kept 400,000 guns out of the wrong hands with the Brady bill. And now they know that a lot of people with criminal backgrounds are trying to get guns at gun shows and flea markets and things of that kind. It is time to close the loophole—it's a simple, simple, straightforward question on the merits. And if everyone voted on the merits it would carry by 80 percent. And I think we all know that.

NATO-Russia Negotiations on Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, can you report any progress at all in the talks with the Russians and resolving the situation of their role in Kosovo?

The President. I just got an update. They're still talking. We haven't resolved all the issues, but they have made pretty good progress today. I'm pleased, and I would urge

them to keep working, and I think we'll bring this to a successful conclusion in the next little while—the next day or so I think we'll get it worked out. There has been progress today. I'm pleased with that.

Q. Does that progress relate to control of the airport?

The President. I think that until we have it all worked out—I don't want to get into what's been done and what hasn't. But I have—I can tell you that there has been substantive progress on very important issues. We've still got, I think, maybe just one issue, maybe two to resolve. But we're making progress. Everybody is working in good faith, and I expect it to be done.

Q. When do you think it will get worked out?

The President. Soon. They know we don't have a lot of time, and they know that we need to be—all of us need to be putting all of our energies on rapid, comprehensive deployment so that we can provide security to everyone and begin to work on building the institutions of civil government in Kosovo that will treat all the citizens of Kosovo in a fair and equitable way. And the quicker we get to work on that, the better.

Now, we're doing that now. We've got, as I said, we've got, I told you today, earlier, we've gotten 15,000 of our troops in there; we're deploying as rapidly as we can. We've been working like crazy on this mine problem; we don't want to lose any more of the refugees coming home to landmines. They desperately want to come home. They love their country. They want to be there. And so that's what I want us to focus on. That's what I want all of us to focus on.

We had a very, very good partnership with the Russians in Bosnia, and I think once these agreements are made, people on all sides will keep all the commitments, and we'll have a good partnership here.

Gun Control Legislation

Q. Mr. President, you said several times today that the gun vote is difficult for many Members. You've been talking to Members, presumably to Democrats it's most hard for. Why is it so hard for them? What are they telling you?

The President. Well, I think that a lot of them who represent rural districts, where there are a lot of gunowners, know that in 1994 the NRA beat somewhere between 12 and 20 of our Members. I mean, let's just put it—and they did it by scaring legitimate gunowners into thinking the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban were going to do terrible things to them and would do no good in fighting crime.

But 5 years later, I'd like to point out, number one, it didn't do terrible things to legitimate gunowners. Number two, it kept 400,000 guns out of the wrong hands. And number three, the country has moved on this; rural people have moved on this. And Littleton galvanized the country. This is crazy for the United States to be the only advanced country in the world that doesn't take comprehensive, sensible, thorough steps to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals. It's just—it doesn't make any sense.

So I think that—my belief is that if a Member in a difficult district is willing to cast this vote and then aggressively defend it, there will be no losses. In fact, they will be rewarded for doing this, even in the difficult districts, in 2000. But I have told them all—you know, I've had very honest, non-pressure oriented conversations. This is something I care deeply about. I come from a State where this is a big issue. I was profoundly proud that every Southern Democrat voted to close the gun show loophole in the United States Senate. And that means not only that they know it's the right thing to do; it means that they're confident they can go home to our part of the country and defend it. And I believe that.

And I don't believe—again, I don't believe this is a big partisan issue anywhere but Washington, I think that's at least like the Patients' Bill of Rights I think—you know, I had a friend of mine from the Intermountain West in Washington last week, whose brother owns an arsenal of weapons, literally, including semi-automatic weapons. He's a big collector of guns. And his brother, he sent me a message, he said, "You know, this ought to be passed. I keep my guns locked. I'm trained to use them. I'm careful about them. I don't want anybody to have

any of this stuff they shouldn't have, and this is wrong."

So I think that serious—I'm amazed by how many people have called into the White House on our comment line and identified themselves as NRA members, identified themselves as Republicans, who disagree with me on my things, encouraging us to go forward on this. The country has moved on this. And everybody knows that the only way anyone can get bead on this is if the facts are misrepresented to the voters. Now, there were some voters that were in a—they weren't in a most positive frame of mind in '94, anyway. But the public is in a positive frame of mind now. They know our economy is working. They know our crime rate is down. They know our welfare rolls are down. They know our social problems are diminishing. And they are profoundly moved by what happened at Littleton. They don't want these children to have died for nothing.

And this should not be a partisan issue. There are some people, like Mr. Dingell, who honestly disagree. They ought to have a chance to vote their convictions. But you know and I know and everybody that covers the Congress knows that the overwhelming majority of the Congress believes that if we close the gun show loophole, that we'll keep more guns out of the hands of criminals; we'll save more lives; and we won't inconvenience legitimate gun owners. Everybody knows that's the truth on the merits. So I just pray that they'll go in there and vote on the merits. Then if they'll defend their votes in the election, none of them, Republicans or Democrats, will be defeated.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:03 p.m. at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. In his remarks, the President referred to Representative John D. Dingell. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Memorandum on Suspension of Limitation Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act

June 17, 1999

Presidential Determination No. 99-29

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Suspension of Limitation Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 7(a) of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-45) (the "Act"), I hereby determine that it is necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States to suspend for a period of 6 months the limitation set forth in section 3(b) of the Act.

You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit this determination to the Congress, accompanied by a report in accordance with section 7(a) of the Act, and to publish the determination in the *Federal Register*.

This suspension shall take effect after transmission of this determination and report to the Congress.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 18.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan in Cologne, Germany

June 18, 1999

Prime Minister Obuchi. I look forward very much to meeting you again next summer, in July, when we host the Kyushu-Okinawa summit. I hope to see you there.

President Clinton. And I'm very pleased that it's going to be in Okinawa. That's great.